

## SOME SPECIFIC YOUTH PROGRAM MODELS

### **The Alternatives to Violence in Schools (AViS) Program, Buffalo, NY**

AViS began in 1989 as one response of the Western New York Peace Center (a community-based social change organization) to the increasing level of violence in our community. Our initial goals were to offer Basic workshops to staff members of elementary Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) that had supportive principals and to provide follow-up curriculum strategies for teachers interested in implementing conflict resolution in their classrooms.

About the same time, we facilitated a weekend overnight Basic workshop for a group of 15 year-olds. It was student-initiated and supported by an outstanding teacher who assumed responsibility for all the logistics. We ultimately did two Advanced workshops and a Training for Facilitators with this same group and were able to assign a number of them to teams as we continued providing workshops at that school.

While we have been pleased with individual responses to both student and faculty workshops, it has been a struggle to make any real lasting change in general school climates. As with AVP youth work elsewhere, there were (and still are) many obstacles to long-term in-depth work in schools in Western New York: an already overcrowded time schedule, difficulty finding financial support and good curriculum material plus an emphasis on “standards” that further pressures teachers. Fortunately over the years, the availability of direct conflict resolution resources for teachers has improved tremendously.

We have continued to evolve into a successful, respected program in spite of early disappointments. At this juncture (summer 2000), the AViS program is composed of these elements:

- AVP Basic workshops for **staff members of elementary schools** in Western New York (primarily BPS), usually those with a grade 3-8 population (ages 8-13). We have occasionally done an Advanced workshop for interested faculty members.
- Follow-up work, in after-school sessions as well as individualized mentoring work, with teachers who voluntarily agree to implement a minimum of 20 conflict resolution lessons (45-60 minutes each) in their classrooms during the school year. Such mentoring involves developing lesson plans with a teacher, demonstrating those lessons in the class, and providing whatever backup and support are helpful until the teacher is ready to carry on the teaching alone. (See Elementary School Sample Lesson page E-3)
- AVP Basic/Advanced/T4F workshops for **high school students** (usually starting at age 15-16 **and staff members** who accompany them to an off-site location. Ideally a rural camp with over night accommodations adds a great deal to the experience, but this is difficult and costly to arrange. Usually we are in a local church. We have also done a workshop for **pregnant and new parents** still attending high school (with the same schedule as regular school workshops).
- AVP Basic workshops for **parents/guardians** of children who attend BPS schools, with one or more “reunion” days to continue building a supportive community in which parents can develop trust and increased respect for themselves and others.
- We are very fortunate to have several **bilingual** (Spanish) facilitators who have enabled us to provide workshops in Spanish for parents and high school students who naturally respond more openly and express themselves more eloquently when they have the opportunity to use their first language.

We have come a long way toward reaching our goal of changing school cultures so that everyone can grow and live in a nonviolent community. This could not have been accomplished without the support and resources of the Western New York Peace Center, the vision and enthusiasm of the principals, and the energy and commitment of the teachers involved.

***Audrey Mang and Rae Rosen, AVP Niagara Frontier Area Council, NY***

### **An AVP/HIP Program, St. Paul, Minnesota**

Getting into a school and to the right (decision-making) person can be the biggest hurdle to establishing a school-based AVP/HIP program. A school contact can ease entry into a new school program — but it does not guarantee that it will be easy. Being a parent of a student helps, as does knowing a teacher, or better yet, an administrator. If you're just starting, it is best to focus on a single school or two rather than broadcasting widely. (You need to think of having enough facilitators if you get lots of requests. And, some facilitators prefer not to work with youth). Be prepared for many phone calls and one-way conversations with answering machines. One alternative might be a custom-made videotape (made by your local AVP group), no longer than 15 minutes, which highlights the program and introduces your youth facilitators. It has the advantage of being a consistent message and available to be shared with many decision makers at their convenience. A mini session would be a further option. One needs perseverance and tenacity in breaking into a school community.

Once you've developed a stable contact, communication is the critical process in moving toward actual workshops. Remember, your contact probably has a dozen or more similar projects s/he is handling — and you have a single purpose. Have patience and be flexible to meet with your contact or other school officials (including parent groups).

Part of that communication will focus around developing details of the workshops. In selecting a location (probably within the school building), inquire what other activities are taking place within the workshop time. In St. Paul, we were competing for space with Saturday tutoring and a local college's in-service program. This required shifting rooms and dealing with a noisy environment. Be conscious of the need for security of the building and participants. Participants from another school will be curious and may wander into areas off-limits during breaks or meals. Establish what school equipment is available (white boards, flip charts etc.) and what you need to provide. Arrange for food and especially snacks. Typical youth are growing rapidly and require frequent snack breaks beside regular meals. Plan for energy-producing foods, including fruit, and avoid junk food (if possible). During guidelines/introduction to the workshop, offer participants the flexibility to get up during a non-active time and get a snack, (if they don't disrupt the group) and can pay attention to what is going on.

Probably the most important and difficult task will be the determination of a schedule for the workshop. Weekends, evenings, one day, two days, three days: that depends on a lot of factors. In St. Paul, we settled on a two-day workshop — Friday and Saturday. Friday we started at 1:30 and went to 10 PM. On Saturday we went from 9 AM to 9 PM. The Friday sessions were short, and each session had a break and at least two L&L's.

Each workshop was a different experience, although other than being aware of the participants' needs for frequent breaks, food/snacks, small talk among participants, very little of the standard AVP workshop was changed for youth. We found that a certain level of distraction had to be tolerated and, when close attention was required, just our mention was enough to put everyone on track. We had adolescent students ages 14-17 from various schools in the workshop, but we also had a staff person participate from each school.

***Terry Kayser, St. Paul, Minnesota***

### **AVP in the Classroom, New York City, New York**

In the spring of 1994, a group of teachers in a middle school (ages 12-14) in New York City put together the Study Center for Law And Peace which combined a law-related education program with conflict resolution. It was the first time that this was ever put together in this fashion; in many ways it was a response to incidents of violence in the school when the children were harming each other and their teachers.

The program is part of the regular curriculum and the students meet with the teacher three times a week for 40 minutes. The format is similar to an AVP workshop, although, because it is a regular classroom, the model is different in that the material is taught rather than facilitated. Each class begins with an Agenda Preview (listing all the exercises related to the day's lesson), and a Gathering (sometimes writing a paragraph, or just going around the room). Each class ends with an Evaluation, and homework. (Homework might be, "Find a situation at home to apply the specific tools we learned today").

Typically a lesson includes an exercise, for example, on Anger Management such as Triggers (called "Buttons" in this manual) or Sharing a Conflict I Resolved Nonviolently. We include most of the Affirmation Exercises to build self-esteem.

Using Light and Livelies for behavior modification and to reinforce the concepts of Cooperation, Communication, Community Building, Conflict Resolution and Affirmation has been an effective way to teach and to drive home the message that each individual has something to offer the group.

Each person is expected to contribute energy, attention and a willingness to at least hear everything out before rejecting an idea. The right to pass comes with the expectation that the person is participating but chooses to sit out of a particular exercise for whatever reason. The right to pass does not mean you can sit there and do nothing. Students use adjective names with one another, as well as with the teacher in the classroom setting.

AVP is used with 7th, 8th and 9th graders (12, 13 and 14 year-olds). The 7th graders are presented specific skills such as: Brainstorming, Win-Win, Affirming Self and Others, Stress Management, Anger Management, Trust Issues, I-Messages, Decision-Making and Problem Solving Techniques. The plan for the 8th Graders teaches the concept of Consensus and more advanced levels of Communication and Cooperation. The 9th graders get the opportunity to review what was taught in the 7th and 8th grades and then learn about international conflict resolution as they participate in the Model United Nations program. Here they learn the deeper roots of racism and stereotypes and learn to appreciate diversity. At all levels, we work on developing empathy and especially use scenarios where students role play their parents or other authority figures. Meanwhile ALL the students are taught to mediate conflicts. As a result, they are more than capable of training other students to be mediators. They become skilled facilitators.

How has AVP helped? It has helped students to bond with one another. It has given them some options to consider when they are angry, as well as creative ways to deal with the violence in their environments. The students are more articulate, more willing to take a risk to keep the peace and they are achieving their goals. There have been many potentially violent incidents in the school (sometimes involving other teachers or administrative policy) that the students have successfully resolved.

***Trace Ocampo-Gaskin, New York City***

### **Community Workshops for Youth and Adults - Burlington, New Jersey**

An AVP youth program was started in 1995-6 in a Trenton high school and middle school. To overcome difficulties experienced in scheduling classroom space and staff, and in order to reach a broader and more diverse population from the public and private schools in New Jersey and Philadelphia, a change in format was instituted in 1997. The Burlington NJ Meeting House Youth Conference Center, equipped with eighty-eight bunk beds, large kitchen and large meeting rooms is used on alternate months to house three 18-hour workshops concurrently for a residential community from 30 to 70 teenagers and adults. Any combinations of Basic, Advanced and T4F Workshops are possible on a particular weekend. The workshops are led by volunteers from a pool of youth and adults, which at one point numbered 30 AVP facilitators. Modest stipends are given to facilitators (to help ensure the return of youth facilitators). Workshop agendas and procedures follow the guidelines of AVP and of the HIP Project. The workshops are known as HIP/RAVE workshops: "Help Increase the Peace/Real Alternatives to Violence for Everyone."

The residential feature of this arrangement makes it convenient for people traveling from a distance; thus the community can be very diverse, which always improves the experience for participants. Age diversity is also a goal, so that up to 30% of the participants may be adults (as old as 80!). The three workshop groups mingle at meals and during evening activities, and there are cooperative experiences as participants share the kitchen and clean-up duties. The experience of being away from home is a big factor for many young people. Like a summer camp experience, there are benefits as well as extra challenges for the staff. More activities outside the workshop format must be planned and volunteer monitors are needed at night.

Ideally, each workshop has a facilitator team of two adults, two youth, two females, two males, two minorities, and two Caucasians — in any combination, for a total of 4 or 5. A program oversight committee called Community Peace Trainers (an AFSC Program) provides planning and fund-raising for the program. Grants pay for scholarships for many participants and keep the participant fees as low as \$70 per workshop. While networking in faith communities, local publicity and mail-out flyers are effective, paid staff has been needed to market the program to school principals, guidance counselors and teachers. The greatest success has been with community and school groups, who keep returning with more students and who then integrate the AVP guidelines into their own activities.

***Tom Truitt, Chestertown, MD***

### **The Portland, (Oregon) School Program**

One of the most important ingredients in a school-based AVP program is the support of someone within the faculty or staff. Our most successful high school program (14 to 18 year-olds) is to the credit of the vice principal of the school. She was able to convince other teachers that it was better for their students to be released from class to do the workshop than to attend class. And she had a good enough relationship with the students that she was able to convince a wide range of students to attend the workshop. She became a facilitator herself and also knew that the workshop needed all kinds of students, not just those from the anger management program.

We have used a few variations on the usual weekend format for our school-based workshops: all day Saturday, Sunday and Monday; Sunday, Monday and Tuesday with students excused from class (but not from homework); Thursday evening, all day Saturday and Sunday; Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Students are given 1/4 to 1/2 credit for the workshop.

We have always attempted to train students as facilitators, but they do grow up and move on so fast that it has been hard to keep a core of student facilitators. We have found that all youth workshops work fine; but I do think that a few selected adults improve the quality of the workshops. These adults need to be selected; they have to be willing to sit on the floor with students and treat them as equals and to be in the workshop as coequal participants. They have to be willing to share their stories and not be judgmental when students share their own stories. If they are there to supervise or to see what happens or only for the benefit of the students, rather than for their own learning, they can be detrimental to the workshop.

The content differs from community-based workshops very little. We schedule more L&L's (at least one per hour) and more breaks; exercises go faster because students take less time to debrief; debriefing is difficult until later in the workshop. There are some exercises that really work in youth workshops that seem to have less relevance for adults. Two examples are Choices and Consequences and Life Beliefs, both of which are included in this manual.  
***Jim Williams, Portland, Oregon, AVP***

### **Project Planet Peace, Mission, British Columbia, Canada**

This project begins in September when, in order to establish a strong sense of community, we offer a one-day workshop to the entire school: students, teachers, parents, support and administration personnel. Generally there have been 20-30 people who have volunteered to take this one-day workshop. Since this is only one day, we do some explanatory work, as well as some experiential exercises. We generally end the day with an exercise combining "Imaging a New Community" and "Where Do We Go From Here?". As a result, by the end of the day, this community has created its image of an ideal school and determined its priorities for the school year. All decisions are arrived at with a consensus model of decision making, and the principles governing this workshop are the same as those used within student workshops.

In our area, there are many French and English speakers, but we choose not to have separate workshops for different languages. This workshop is offered with simultaneous translations into English and French, as an important part of the group developing a strong sense community, as well as a model for the entire school community.

This is followed the next week with a variety of workshops for the students:

Half day workshops provided for the different age levels with the following focus:

5 year-olds (kindergarten) - Affirmation and Encouragement

6-7 year-olds (first and second grades) - Diversity and Respect

7-8 year-olds (second and third grades) - Conflict and Communication

9-10 year-olds (fourth and fifth grades) - A three-day Basic workshop

Ideally we have 15-20 participants in the workshop, and we prefer to hold it off school grounds, at a local church or community center.

11-12 year-olds (sixth and seventh grades) - A three-day Advanced workshop

This is for those students who have participated in a Basic workshop. The group chooses one or two subjects to cover more fully. The number of participants is limited to 12-16. Again, an alternative setting to the school is preferred.



Follow-up possibilities have included: Monthly mini workshops (sometimes with as many as 80 participants!), a full workshop offered to the entire school community (with total number of participants limited to 20, preferably with some youth participants), a T4F workshop offered to those students who have completed the first two levels, and Advanced and T4F workshops offered to adults in the community.

***Meredith Egan, Marc Forget and Chris Hitchcock, British Columbia, Canada, AVP***

### **The Walton, (New York) Experience**

In 1993, the first year of AVP at the Walton School, 2 Basic, 1 Advanced and 1 T4F workshops were offered each semester or half school year. Now, in 2000, one Basic and one Advanced workshop are held each semester. One T4F is offered each year.

Basic Workshops for students in grades eight through twelve (13 through 18 year-olds) initially were held on full school days, totaling 16-18 hours. The preferable days were Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; this gave everyone a chance to catch up on work and life before returning to the usual school setting.

Now the Walton school system has adopted a new schedule using ninety minute periods. It is more intense and one subject is covered in a shorter period of time. Missing three days in a row means a student would miss a great deal of work. In 1999 Basic Workshops were scheduled on 3 consecutive Fridays. Now in 2000, a schedule similar to that of the Advanced (see below) is being tried.

Advanced Workshops and T4F's are usually offered on Thursday (noon to 6 PM); Friday (full school day); and Saturday (9 AM - 4 PM).

Many older students, after completing a workshop, suggested that AVP be offered to younger students, 10-13 year-olds. Mini-programs were introduced toward the end of the second year of AVP in Walton, when enough facilitators were available. Having older students on the teams has been and is particularly helpful.

**Fifth Grade:** The first mini-program is done with 10 year-olds toward the end of the school year. It is an introductory session of about 1 hour, a prelude to the longer program that is offered to them the next year. The program is offered in the corner of a gym to one class at a time, the last period of the day. Doing the program in a location other than the class gives facilitators time to hang posters and set up a circle of chairs, etc.

**Sixth Grade:** This program for eleven year-olds is run over the course of four days, two periods per day - for a total of about 6 hours. It is scheduled at the beginning of the school year. The program is offered to the entire grade at the same time. It is done with "student advisor groups" which vary in number from 8 to 18 participants. Some staff also participate. Usually two or three facilitators (staff, older students, and community volunteers) work with each group. The first day uses Periods 7 and 8; the second, Periods 5 and 6; the third, "advisor" time and Periods 3 and 4; and the fourth, Periods 1 and 2 and "advisor" time.

**Seventh Grade:** The program presented to twelve year-olds is done in three short sessions over the course of an entire day (about 6 hours). It is offered early in the year, to the entire grade at the same time, in groups of 15-20.

For agendas regarding these three mini programs, see Elementary and Middle School Program Agendas, Section E.

***Florence McNeil and Kate Ryan, AVP Catskill Area Council, NY***